DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 127 493 CG 010 710

AUTHOR Arnold, Roger S.
TITLE Human Institutions and Values: Report on a Symposium.
PUB DATE [75]
NOTE 8p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Counseling Effectiveness; *Environmental Influences; *Humanism; *Institutional Environment; Institutional Role; *Mental Illness; Psychotherapy; Social Problems; State of the Art Reviews; *Values

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the values of society's basic institutions such as the family, the school, religion, business and government from the psychotherapist's point of view. Dr. Donald J. Tyrell states the problem: "the person suffers harm from the institution; he seeks help from the psychotherapist to undo the damage; he returns to the institutional setting and the hard-won psychological gains are gradually eroded so that he again returns to the therapist or gives up." In an effort to determine if and why the stated values of an institution are generally inoperative, the author invited one representative from several major institutions, and asked each the following questions: (1) What are the core positive values that you try to promote in your institution? (2) Has your work necessitated an actual shift in priority with regard to the interpretation and implementation of these values?; and (3) What are the negative values operative within your institution? The author concludes that the vicious circle described does not originate from the basic value structure of the institutions but from failure of the leaders and members of these institutions to realize them authentically and responsibly. (Author/HMV)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED127493

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

HUMAN INSTITUTIONS AND VALUES

REPORT ON A SYMPOSIUM

Roger S. Arnold

Loyola University, Chicago

Psychotherapists have been interested in the institutions that affect human beings for a long time. Their preoccupation, however, has been with the deleterious effects that institutions such as the family, the school, religion, business and government have had on the psychic life of their clients. Even though institutions have been established and maintained to foster certain positive values for their members, the net result of their effect on the individual seemed, from the therapists' point of view, to have been negative.

Dr. Donald J. Tyrell, a clinical psychologist in private practice, has been especially concerned with this problem. He conceives of it in these terms: the person suffers harm from the institution; he seeks help from the psychotherapist to undo the damage; he returns to the institutional setting and the hard won psychological gains are gradually eroded so that he again returns to the therapist or gives up. The obvious vicious circle raises a number of questions. Why are the stated values of the institution generally inoperative? Why does it damage rather than enhance human life? Can there be more agreement between psychotherapists and institutions about the values that make for a good life? Can the two cooperate effectively in

fostering these values?

As a start toward solving these problems he invited representatives from some of the major institutions to participate in a symposium at the 1975 convention of the American Psychological Association. The representatives were: Hon. Robert C. Buckley, Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois, Divorce Division; Mr. Conrad Poll, Director, Industrial Relations, Brunswick Corporation, Rev. Bede Smith, S.V.D., Ph.D., Mundelein College, Chicago, Illinois; Ms. Joyce Fern Glasser, Director, Mundelein Elementary School District #75, In Service Program - Title III ESEA.

The participants met informally before the symposium to consider the best way to approach these complex issues. They agreed that each would give a brief answer to the following questions: (a) What are the core positive values that you try to promote in your institution? (b) Has your actual work necessitated a shift in priority with regard to the interpretation and implementation of these values? (c) What are the negative values operative within your institution that you judge to be destructive of the values you hold?

Ms. Glasser answered the first question by saying that the most important value she tries to promote is setting the example, increasingly eliminating the "do as I say, not as I do" approach to the business of education. This value implies a heavy commitment to self-knowledge and self-improvement.

Mr. Poll proposed that the modern businessman's prime

vocation is producing goods and services and selling them at a reasonable profit. To accomplish this purpose, he must maximize his production process and efficiently utilize his human organization resources. In doing this, however, he must respect the dignity of the individual and enhance his right to derive personal satisfaction from his work, provide a measure of security, and make it possible for him to develop self-reliance, honesty, integrity, trust, and confidence.

Judge Buckley maintained that even though one of the functions of the divorce court is the dissolution of marriages, the basic value it tries to promote is the integrity of the family. This means helping couples in trouble to build and preserve strong family ties by showing them that marriage demands cooperation and mutual respect.

Dr. Tyrell replied that psychotherapy is essentially a moral enterprise involving corrective emotional experiences and changed values, values that are compatible with the human being as he is. The therapist must be a model of these values for the client; he must practice what he preaches. Therefore psychotherapy, generally, is more closely related to teaching than to medicine.

Rev. Smith said that religion as an institution has traditionally been a transmitter of values within a culture, but gradually this role has been largely displaced into other institutions such as education and psychotherapy. However, the main positive values these latter institutions promote have their roots in the Judeo-Christian heritage. These values include: (a) the universal dignity of man, (b) regard and

care for one's fellow man, (c) freedom from slaveries from within and without, (d) truthfulness, particularly in the acceptance of human assets and limitations. These values have certainly been expressed in the stream of Judeo-Christian consciousness and experience through history. The extent that they have been operative in Christian behavior at any given time and place, historically and culturally, has been sadly conditioned.

In the preliminary discussion, the participants thought that the answer to the second question, "Has your work necessitated a shift in priority with regard to the interpretation and implementation of these values?" would represent a separate category. In the symposium itself this was not the case. The answers tended to be an expansion of the first question or an anticipation of the third. Ms. Glasser again stressed the need to earn the respect of the students by providing a good model as opposed to demanding it as one would of a slave. Mr. Poll saw himself struggling to reconcile the value of production and efficiency with the dignity and personal satisfaction of the worker. Judge Buckley was concerned with the value of confronting the troubled couple with the fact that both parties are at fault in a divorce. Even after a separation the scars and emotional problems are still there so that the individuals should seriously consider changing themselves rather than their partners. The shift that Dr. Tyrell saw was the realization that the client needed to develop the willingness to make mistakes, to share them and thus keep

searching. The person must be responsible and make the necessary changes in his life but he does not have to be perfect.

The last question was, "What are the negative values within your institution that you judge to be destructive of the values you hold?"

In response to this Ms. Glasser said that there were a number of negative values in education that are destructive of the ones that she holds: (a) The job is more important than the human being doing it. There is little emphasis on the teacher and/or administrator as a human being. In addition, there is practically no movement, except in isolated cases, toward the endorsement of the affective growth of the teachers. (b) The desire for safety and secrecy caused by lack of trust and the use of power and manipulation is detrimental to open communication. (c) The "don't rock the boat attitude" evidenced in the separation of the self with its own personal goals from the self in the working role. The teacher is therefore not supposed to show all of himself but just those parts that the job demands - being friendly, smiling, crafty, intelligent, emotionally very controlled.

Mr. Poll sees the negative values creeping into business under the pressure of obstacles to profitability. The businessman marshalls his talents and develops strategies to maintain his profit margins. He takes alternative courses of action. But, too often, there are roadblocks that test the limits of

his moral values, code of ethics and his personal honesty. Many times he finds his adherence to these values have lost him a competitive edge. He sees others bend values and twist ethics (although observing firm legal strictures) to their advantage. He sees particularly the practice of seduction and manipulation being used widespreadly to attain business ends. He is told that the art of seduction and manipulation will help him get other people to do what he wants them to do, not because of what they need or is good for them, but because they like him.

Judge Buckley sees the main hindrance to marital reconciliation in divorce cases as lawyers who often resent any attempt at counseling as an intrusion. Another negative factor is the failure to recognize that the children exist after the divorce and that provision for their adequate care is overlooked.

Dr. Tyrell feels that the basic negative influence in practice of psychotherapy is the very exclusion of values as an essential part of the treatment process. Until quite recently, even to talk of values as a part of therapy was considered unscientific and unprofessional.

Lastly, Rev. Smith considered hypocrisy and defensiveness as the predominant negative values in religious groups. Hypocrisy becomes particularly evident in religious groups because the gap between the explicit "out front" values handed on by the religious tradition and the individual behavior is approximated in the saints but often discrepant in others. Rather

than confront the discrepancy, it is easier and more common to live out the pretence and defend it.

At the end of the presentations and discussion it was obvious and gratifying to both the participants and the audience that there was considerable agreement about the nature of the positive values that each institution proposes to establish and foster. There was a like consensus regarding the negative values that hinder or block this goal. The recognition of human dignity is the fundamental value common to each institution. Truthfulness, care and freedom are good for people whether in education, business, family life, therapy, or religion; by contrast, hiding, lying, evasiveness, indifference, shirking responsibility, seduction, and manipulation are destructive.

The vicious circle, then, described at the beginning of the report does not seem to originate from the basic value structure of the institutions but from the failure of the leaders and members of these same institutions to realize them authentically and responsibly. The circle can best be eliminated, not by dismantling the institutions but by a courageous and forthright implementation of the values to which each one is already committed.